

PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN

(11)Publication number : 2000-069309
 (43)Date of publication of application : 03.03.2000

(51)Int.CI. H04N 1/60
 G06T 5/00
 H04N 1/46
 H04N 17/02

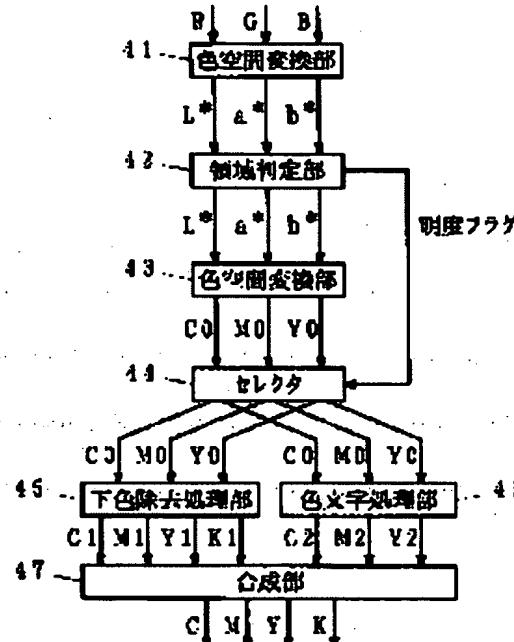
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(54) IMAGE PROCESSOR AND IMAGE FORMING SYSTEM

(57)Abstract:

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To provide an image processor by which image quality of color characters is improved.

SOLUTION: For this image processing unit, when the attribute of an image denotes a color character, an area discrimination section 42 discriminates lightness of the character color and outputs a lightness flag denoting color characters for an object of color character processing except for a very dark color and a very light color. A selector 44 gives an images signal to an under color elimination processing section 45 or a color character processing section 46, in response to the lightness flag. The color character processing section 46 decides the color of a maximum value in color components and saturates the color of the maximum value to a maximum level. Thus, the color character is structured with a color saturated at a maximum level even when it is screen processed at post-stages. Thus, the edges of the color character are preserved, and the color character with satisfactory legibility is formed.



LEGAL STATUS

[Date of request for examination] 23.08.2002

[Date of sending the examiner's decision of rejection]

[Kind of final disposal of application other than the examiner's decision of rejection or application converted registration]

[Date of final disposal for application]

[Patent number]

[Date of registration]

[Number of appeal against examiner's decision of rejection]

[Date of requesting appeal against examiner's
decision of rejection]

[Date of extinction of right]

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CLAIMS

[Claim(s)]

[Claim 1] It is the image processing system which a picture signal classified into two or more attributes which contain a color alphabetic character at least is inputted, has a color transform-processing means perform color transform processing to said picture signal, in an image processing system which performs processing according to each of said attribute to said picture signal when said attribute is a color alphabetic character, and is characterized by for this color transform-processing means to perform at least color transform processing which saves an edge according to lightness of a color alphabetic character.

[Claim 2] It is the image processing system according to claim 1 which said color transform-processing means performs lower color clearance processing about a color alphabetic character with brightness darker than the 1st threshold, and is characterized by a bright alphabetic character not performing lower color clearance processing.

[Claim 3] Said color transform-processing means is an image processing system according to claim 1 or 2 characterized by performing color conversion so that it may extract the greatest color component of the color components which constitute an alphabetic character color and this color component may be saturated on the maximum level, when brightness of a color alphabetic character is darker than the 2nd threshold.

[Claim 4] Said color transform-processing means is an image processing system according to claim 1 or 2 characterized by performing color conversion so that it may extract the greatest color component of the color components which constitute an alphabetic character color and this color component may be saturated on the maximum level, when brightness of a color alphabetic character is darker than the perimeter and darker than said 2nd threshold.

[Claim 5] It is the image formation system characterized by having an image formation means to form a color picture by an image processing system and an area gradation method given in any 1 term of claim 1 thru/or claim 4, and said image formation means forming a frame of a color alphabetic character by color component which saturated the maximum level in said image processing system, and holding an edge and forming a color alphabetic character for other color components in piles by halftone dot.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[Detailed Description of the Invention]

[0001]

[The technical field to which invention belongs] This invention is carried in image formation equipments, such as a printer, and a digital process copying machine, facsimile apparatus, and relates to a suitable image processing system and the image formation system carrying this image processing system.

[0002]

[Description of the Prior Art] In a printer, a digital process copying machine, etc. in recent years, in order to raise the image quality of the image formed on the record medium—ed, various kinds of processings are performed. Since the effective processing technique changes with attributes of the image formed especially, processing according to the attribute of the image to form is performed, and improvement in image quality is in drawing. For example, an alphabetic character has many thin lines, and although a sharp image is required, it is tolerant to color gap of some. On the other hand, halftone images, such as a photograph, do not require the sharpness like an alphabetic character, while repeatability, such as brightness and a color tone, is required.

[0003] There is an area gradation method expressing the gradation of the color of each color material by changing the area colored with color material as the formation method of a color picture. In case an image is formed using this area gradation method, screen treatment is performed for every color of color material, respectively, and the image to form is formed as a halftone dot-like image. A full color image can be formed by forming the image of the shape of a halftone dot of such each color in piles.

[0004] However, since the image formed by this area gradation method is the meeting of a halftone dot fundamentally, it turns into an image which has graininess. Although graininess stopped becoming a problem not much by images, such as a photograph, by high resolutionization in recent years, by the image as which the sharpness of the edge section is required like an alphabetic character or a line drawing, an edge portion is rough, it becomes notched, and there is a problem that image quality deteriorates. Furthermore, graininess is getting worse further by gap at the time of piling up actually the halftone dot image of the color corresponding to each color material etc.

[0005] Much technology which raises the image quality of a black alphabetic character conventionally is developed to such a problem. As an alphabetic character color, black is used frequently and is a means effective in improvement in image quality of a black alphabetic character. Moreover, some technology which improves image quality is developed also about the color alphabetic character.

[0006] For example, in the color picture processor indicated by JP,63-111766,A, a masking means is changed with a multicolor alphabetic character manuscript and a halftone manuscript, and color transform processing suitable for each manuscript is performed. Especially by this reference, the color muddiness in that color character boundary is controlled about 8 of the primary color which can be formed only with the color material of one color, and the secondary color formed with the color material of two colors colors. Specifically about these eight colors, it is made a pure color with a masking parameter.

[0007] Moreover, in JP,5-48892,A, color transform processing is changed by the black alphabetic character, the color alphabetic character, and the pattern which it is as a result of [by the color judging circuit and the alphabetic character judging circuit] a judgment. Especially about the color alphabetic character, it forms in either of the 8 of an above-mentioned primary color or a secondary color colors, and image quality is raised.

[0008] About such a primary color and a secondary color, good image quality can be acquired by applying the technology of an above-mentioned black alphabetic character about the color material of other colors. However, with such technology, an alphabetic character color can apply only to 8 of a primary color and a secondary color colors. Therefore, about the alphabetic character of neutral colors, it cannot reappear or graininess will remain. Thus, in the color reproduction of only eight colors, the rendering of sufficient color alphabetic character is impossible.

[0009] Moreover, in the color picture processor indicated by JP,1-264847,A, for example, the hue of an image was judged by the hue detector, about the color alphabetic character by which the edge extract was carried out, emphasis and an unnecessary color were removed for the need color, and muddiness of a color alphabetic character and deterioration of a black alphabetic character are prevented. Although the convention about the clear amount of emphasis is not indicated by this reference, only by the emphasis processing which raises the concentration of a need color, graininess cannot remain and cannot still reproduce the edge of a color alphabetic character good.

[0010] Thus, at a Prior art, it is only performing processing which specializes in the color limited as processing to a color alphabetic character, and emphasis processing which raises the concentration of a need color, and there was nothing that took the effect of screen treatment into consideration to the color alphabetic character of halftone.

[0011]

[Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention] This invention was made in view of the situation mentioned above, and aims at offering the image formation system which can obtain the image processing system which can raise the image quality of a color alphabetic character, and the image whose image quality of a color alphabetic character improved with this image processing system.

[0012]

[Means for Solving the Problem] This invention performs color transform processing which saves an edge according to lightness about a color alphabetic character. For example, the greatest color component of the color components which constitute an alphabetic character color is extracted, and color conversion is performed so that the color component may be saturated on the maximum level. A color component which saturated this maximum level serves as a frame of a color alphabetic character, when an image of a color alphabetic character is formed, and the edge section of a color alphabetic character is reproduced good. Since a frame was formed upwards and color components other than a color component used as a frame of a color alphabetic character are piled up according to a halftone dot, they are reproducible also in a color alphabetic character of halftone. Moreover, it is possible by forming a frame for it to hardly be influenced also to gap at the time of piling up a halftone dot image of each color, but to form an image of good image quality.

[0013] In addition, since the amount of color material increases in the above color conversion and image quality deterioration may be caused when brightness of a color alphabetic character is darker than the 1st threshold, lower color clearance processing generates a black print. By generation of this black print, the total amount of color material can be decreased and image quality deterioration can be avoided. Moreover, in the case of a reversed character brighter than the perimeter and an alphabetic character brighter than the 2nd threshold, the greatest color component of the color components which constitute the above alphabetic character colors is extracted, and it can avoid carrying out to it color transform processing which saturates the color component on the maximum level. It is possible to prevent change of an extreme alphabetic character color by this.

[0014]

[Embodiment of the Invention] The block diagram in which drawing 1 shows one gestalt of operation of the image formation system of this invention, and drawing 2 are the block diagrams showing an example of the content of processing similarly. the inside of drawing, and 1 -- a host computer and 2 -- a printer and 3 -- a network and 11 -- application and 12 -- a driver and 21 -- for a color and the gradation amendment processing section, and 24, as for the printer engine section and 26, the screen treatment section and 25 are [the image-processing section and 22 / the rasterization processing section and 23 / a laser actuator and 27] the marking sections.

[0015] The image formation system shown in drawing 1 consists of a host computer 1 and a printer 2, and both are connected by the network 3. Moreover, the image which should be formed may be sent from devices, such as other computers, through this network 3. Furthermore, the image which should be formed may be sent through communication lines, such as the telephone line which is not illustrated.

[0016] In this example, the driver 12 for changing the application 11 which creates a document, an image, etc., and the image formed in a printer 2 into the format that a printer 2 can be interpreted, and transmitting it to a printer 2 is formed in the host computer 1. The document created with application 11 is transmitted to a driver 12, when the image formation to a record-medium-ed top is needed. The document transmitted to the driver 12 is changed into a Page Description Language (PDL). In description by this Page Description Language, the attribute information on that object is added with the information on the image (object) which should be formed actually. In drawing 2, this attribute information is independently shown as an image attribute signal.

[0017] The printer 2 has the image-processing section 21 and the printer engine section 25. The image-processing section 21 interprets the Page Description Language sent from a host computer 1, performs various kinds of image processings, and generates the picture signal which can form the best image in the printer engine section 25. At this time, the optimal image processing for the image of each attribute is performed according to the image attribute signal similarly sent from a host computer 1. The printer engine section 25 forms an image on a record medium-ed actually.

[0018] PDL sent to the printer 2 is interpreted in the rasterization processing section 22, and a raster image is formed. And in a color and the gradation amendment processing section 23, the color conversion and gradation amendment processing according to each attribute are performed. In especially this color and gradation amendment processing section 23, color transform processing which saves an edge according to the lightness of a color alphabetic character as one of the color transform processing to a color alphabetic character is performed. In the screen treatment section 24, screen treatment is performed after the processing in a color and the gradation amendment processing section 23 according to the property of the printer engine section 25. Of this screen treatment, the halftone dot image which carried out the area gradation modulation for every color of each color material is formed. As mentioned above, these processings are performed according to each attribute.

[0019] A halftone dot image is sent to the printer engine section 25, controls a laser beam by the laser actuator 26, forms a latent image, is developed in the marking section 27 and forms an image on a record medium-ed. Since color transform processing which saves an edge about a color alphabetic character in a color and the gradation amendment processing section 23 is performed at this time, even if it forms a color alphabetic character by the area gradation method, an image can be formed by good image quality.

[0020] Drawing 3 is the block diagram showing another example of the content of the processing in one gestalt of operation of the image formation system of this invention. 13 are a color and the gradation amendment processing section among drawing. In this example, a color and the gradation amendment processing section 13 are formed in the host computer 1 side. The content of the processing in this color and gradation amendment processing section 13 is the same as that of above-mentioned color and gradation amendment processing section 23. However, in this color and gradation amendment processing section 13, the picture signal described by PDL serves as a processing object. Therefore, color conversion and gradation

amendment processing will be performed to data added to the drawing object in PDL, such as a color and gradation. Color transform processing which saves an edge according to the lightness of a color alphabetic character as one of the color transform processing to a color alphabetic character at this event is performed.

[0021] What is necessary is just to perform screen treatment in the screen treatment section 24 in a printer 2 side, as it is, after changing into a raster image in the rasterization processing section 22 since PDL to which various kinds of processings were already performed is received.

[0022] In addition, although drawing 2 and drawing 3 showed the example using the marking method of the laser method which used the laser actuator 26 as the printer engine section 25, this invention is applicable to various kinds of marking methods not only using this but other area gradation methods.

[0023] Drawing 4 is the block diagram showing an example of a color and the gradation amendment processing section. As for 31–34, the color transform-processing section, and 35–38 are the gradation amendment sections among drawing. In the driver 12 of a host computer 1, an image is classified into four, a black alphabetic character, a color alphabetic character, a graph, and a photograph, according to this example, and each attribute is added and outputted in it. Of course, as long as the class of attribute includes the attribute of not only these but a color alphabetic character, even if other attributes exist, it may be easy to be natural [the class], and they may be other classification methods. Such an image attribute signal that is the information on an attribute is passed to a color and the gradation amendment processing section 23, or a color and the gradation amendment processing section 13 with a picture signal. In addition, in drawing 4, a continuous line shows a picture signal and the dashed line shows the image attribute signal, respectively.

[0024] A color and the gradation amendment processing sections 23 and 13 have switched the processing algorithm and processing parameter which are performed to a picture signal according to the attribute of each image currently outputted from the driver 12. The color transform-processing sections 31–34 perform color transform processing according to the attribute of each image while performing the color space conversion to the color space of the picture signal which should be outputted from the color space of the picture signal inputted. In this example, an input side shall be a CMYK color space and, as for color space conversion processing, a RGB color space and an output side perform conversion to a CMYK color space eventually from a RGB color space. Or an in-between color space may be used and it is L* a* b* as a middle color space here. Uniform color space is used and it is once L* a*b* from a RGB color space. After changing into uniform color space and performing color processing of after that various kinds, it is L* a* b*. The color space conversion from uniform color space to a CMYK color space is performed. Of course, these color spaces may be examples and an input side, an output side, and a middle color space may be color spaces of arbitration.

[0025] Technique, such as a method of the look-up table which stored for example, the linearity masking method, the nonlinear masking method, or the conversion parameter in three dimension, can be used for conversion of these color spaces. The conversion parameter is designed for the purpose of color matching-coincidence, and optimization is performed by the attribute of an image. Of course, the conversion technique of these color spaces is also an example, and the method of arbitration may be used.

[0026] For example, in the color transform-processing section 34 which processes a picture signal when an image attribute is a photograph, the parameter with which the color difference becomes min is set up, and color repeatability is raised. Moreover, in the color transform-processing section 33 which processes a picture signal when an image attribute is a graph, the parameter which emphasizes the contrast between colors is set up so that he can understand the difference in the color of each graph to a user. In the color transform-processing section 31 which processes a picture signal when an image attribute is a black alphabetic character, an excessive color is not contained, but a parameter is set up so that it can reappear by the black color. And when an image attribute is a color alphabetic character, in the color transform-processing section 32 which processes a picture signal, the parameter with which the color difference becomes min fundamentally is set up, but color transform processing is performed so

that the rendering of an edge may be secured according to the lightness of an alphabetic character color.

[0027] The gradation amendment sections 35-38 mainly perform gradation amendment processing of gamma amendment according to the property of the printer engine section 25 etc. The processing algorithm and processing parameter which perform these gradation amendment sections 35-38 as well as the color transform-processing sections 31-34 to a picture signal according to the attribute of each image are switched.

[0028] The color transform-processing section 32 is explained further. As mentioned above, the color transform-processing section 32 performs color transform processing which was suitable for the color alphabetic character to the picture signal, when the attribute of an image is a color alphabetic character. In this invention, color transform processing is performed so that the rendering of an edge may be secured according to the lightness of an alphabetic character color. As mentioned above, by the recording method using an area gradation method, a halftone dot-like image is formed for every color of each color material by the screen treatment section 24, and a color picture is formed by recording in piles. Therefore, also in the portion of a color alphabetic character, the edge section becomes rickety with a halftone dot-like image. In this color transform-processing section 32, a color character manipulation is performed so that it may not be influenced of halftone-dot-izing by the screen treatment section 24 of such the latter part.

[0029] Specifically, the greatest color component is saturated on the maximum level among the color components of color material. The image with which the color component which saturated this maximum level is actually formed on a record medium-ed even if a halftone dot-like image is formed of the screen treatment section 24 is formed as an image near solid coating rather than it calls it the shape of a halftone dot. Therefore, the frame of a color alphabetic character is formed of this saturated color component, and an edge can be secured.

[0030] Thus, if the frame of a color alphabetic character is securable, even if it piles up a halftone dot-like image by the color of other color material, the edge of a color alphabetic character will be held to some extent. That is, compared with the color used as a frame, it is a thin color except the color used as a frame. Therefore, even if it piles up colors other than the color used as a frame as a halftone dot-like image, the image of the shape of those halftone dot is not conspicuous, and the edge of a deep color seemingly used for formation of a frame is secured.

[0031] Drawing 5 is the block block diagram showing an example of the color transform-processing section 32. For the field judging section and 44, as for the lower color clearance processing section and 46, a selector and 45 are [41 and 43 / the color space conversion section and 42 / the color character-manipulation section and 47] the synthetic sections among drawing. An example of the configuration for forming the frame of a color alphabetic character as mentioned above is shown in drawing 5 .

[0032] The color space conversion section 41 is the inputted picture signal of a RGB color space L* a* b* It changes into the picture signal of uniform color space. Transform processing of this color space is the judgment of the lightness of the image in the following field judging section 42 L* a* b* It is for carrying out in uniform color space. What is necessary is just to perform conversion to the color space which performs that judgment when the field judging section 42 judges in other color spaces, and when judging with the color space of the inputted picture signal, it is not necessary to form this color space conversion section 41. They are various kinds of color tone ready processings which are not illustrated when it changes into the picture signal of L* a* b* uniform color space like this example This L* a* b* It can constitute so that it may carry out in uniform color space, and processing can be simplified.

[0033] The field judging section 42 judges the lightness of an alphabetic character color. L* a* b* In the case of uniform color space, the lightness of an alphabetic character color is L*. It can judge only with a value. L* A signal is compared with a threshold ThL and it classifies into the alphabetic character of a color darker than a threshold ThL, and the alphabetic character of the bright color beyond a threshold ThL. About the alphabetic character of a color darker than a threshold ThL, "0" is outputted in this example as a lightness flag by the lower color clearance

processing section 45 that a black print (K) should be generated. Moreover, about the alphabetic character of the bright color beyond a threshold ThL, "1" is outputted in this example as a lightness flag that a frame should be formed in the maximum color in the color character-manipulation section 46. As a concrete value of a threshold ThL, it can carry out, for example to about 50.

[0034] In addition, about the alphabetic character of a very bright color, if the color character-manipulation section 46 performs color conversion, change of a color will become large too much. Therefore, about the alphabetic character of a color brighter than a threshold ThH, it is supposed that processing by the color character-manipulation section 46 is not performed here, using a lightness flag as "0." The alphabetic character of use of a very bright color is rare when the usual background color is white. However, in the case of a reversed character (negative alphabetic character), it may be used. In the case of such a reversed character, to a color alphabetic character, it may not process as mentioned above, but processing which forms an edge about a surrounding high-concentration background may be carried out to it.

[0035] At this example, the field judging section 42 is $L^* a^* b^*$. Although classified by judging the lightness of a color alphabetic character in uniform color space, you may classify according to not only this but other uniform color space, and a RGB color space and a CMY color space. Moreover, it can also carry out adjustable [of the threshold for a classification] with every color and a hue angle. Repeatability can be raised by this.

[0036] The color space conversion section 43 is $L^* a^* b^*$. The picture signal of uniform color space is changed into the picture signal of a CMY color space. This CMY color space is a color space which consists of a color (except for black) of the color material used in the printer engine section 25. In addition, at this event, the black print (K) for forming an image using a black color material is not created. What is necessary is just to change into the color space doubled with the color of the color material, when the colors of the color material to be used differ. By changing such a color space, the burden in the printer engine section 25 is mitigated.

[0037] A selector 44 sends the picture signal by which the color space conversion was carried out to the processing section which chose and chose either the lower color clearance processing section 45 or the color character-manipulation section 46 in the color space conversion section 43 according to the value of the lightness flag outputted from the field judging section 42. Here, when a lightness flag is "1", the color space conversion section 43 is chosen, and when a lightness flag is "0", the bottom color clearance processing section 45 is chosen.

[0038] The lower color clearance processing section 45 generates a black print (K) signal from the picture signal of a CMY color space. As concrete processing, the minimum chrominance signal is determined among each chrominance signal of C, M, and Y. And the amount (0 – 100%) of the minimum chrominance signal to arbitration is determined, and while making the determined amount into a black print (K) signal, only the determined amount is subtracted from each chrominance signal. It can change into the amount of color material of C, M, Y, and K which does not become a burden at the printer engine section 25 by this processing, with lightness and color reproduction held.

[0039] In addition, when a black print is generated and an image is formed by this lower color clearance processing section 45, muddiness may be produced about the color of the brightness beyond inside lightness. Therefore, a black print is not generated in the color character-manipulation section 46 which processes the color alphabetic character of a dark color.

[0040] The rate (amount of above-mentioned arbitration) which generates a black print according to brightness in case a black print is generated in the lower color clearance section 45 can be changed. For example, about a bright color, 0, i.e., a black print, is not [the rate which generates a black print] generable, either. Although it is a time of a lightness flag being "0" that the lower color clearance processing section 45 is chosen in a selector 44, this has the lightness of an alphabetic character color smaller than a threshold ThL, or is at the larger time than a threshold ThH. When the lightness of an alphabetic character color is larger than a threshold ThH, it can constitute being able to use as 0 the rate which generates a black print so that it may output as it is, without generating a black print.

[0041] The color character-manipulation section 46 performs processing which saturates the greatest color component on the maximum level of a color component among the color components of C, M, and Y. Drawing 6 is the block block diagram showing an example of the color character-manipulation section 46. As for 51, the maximum color decision section and 52 are the saturation processing sections among drawing. If the color character-manipulation section 46 is chosen by the selector 44 and the picture signal of a CMY color space is passed, the picture signal will be inputted into the maximum color decision section 51 and the saturation processing section 52. In the maximum color decision section 51, a value detects the greatest color component among the color components of C, M, and Y. And the saturation processing section 52 is passed by making the signal which shows the detected color component into the maximum color flag. Here, it shall express, respectively that C component is max at the time of "10" about M component being max at the time of "01" about Y component being max when the maximum color flag is "00."

[0042] The saturation processing section 52 saturates the color component on the maximum level about the color component which the maximum color flag passed from the maximum color decision section 51 shows. For example, if each color component is shown by 8 bits and the value of 0 to 255 is taken, the value of the color component which the maximum color flag shows is set to 255. About other color components, it does not change as it is.

[0043] Thus, since the color which saturated the maximum level by the saturation processing section 52 is outputted as a solid image rather than it calls it a halftone dot-like image even if it is outputted through the screen treatment section 24, it can reproduce an edge good and serves as a frame of a color alphabetic character. That is, the color which serves as a frame of a color alphabetic character in the maximum color decision section 51 is determined, and color conversion is performed so that an edge may be saved about the color which serves as the frame in the saturation processing section 52.

[0044] The synthetic section 47 packs the picture signal processed for every alphabetic character color in either the lower color clearance processing section 45 or the color character-manipulation section 46, and outputs it as a picture signal of a CMYK color space. As the picture signal after the outputted processing is shown in drawing 4, it is inputted into the gradation amendment section 36 for color alphabetic characters, and gradation amendment processing is performed.

[0045] Drawing 7 is a flow chart which shows the example of operation in an example of the color transform-processing section 32. It is the picture signal which shows the inputted color alphabetic character of a RGB color space in S61 first at the color space conversion section 41 L* a* b*. It changes into the picture signal of uniform color space. And it sets to S62 and the field judging section 42 is lightness L* in a picture signal. As compared with a threshold ThL, an alphabetic character darker than a threshold ThL and the bright alphabetic character beyond a threshold ThL is judged for a value. In being an alphabetic character darker than a threshold ThL, in S64, it sets "0" as a lightness flag so that a black print may be created in the lower color clearance processing section 45. Moreover, since it is better not to perform processing by the color character-manipulation section 46 about a very bright alphabetic character when it is an alphabetic character brighter than a threshold ThL, about an alphabetic character brighter than a threshold ThH, "0" is too set as a lightness flag in S64. If it is an alphabetic character darker than a threshold ThH, in S63, "1" will be set as a lightness flag. After setting out of such a lightness flag finishes, it sets to S65, and it is L* a* b*. The picture signal of uniform color space is changed into the picture signal of a CMY color space in the color space conversion section 43.

[0046] In S66, with reference to the lightness flag set up in S63 or S64, if a lightness flag is "0", a selector 44 will choose the lower color clearance processing section 45, and will perform lower color clearance processing in S67. By this processing, a black print (K) is generated about the alphabetic character of very dark colors, such as dark brown and deep blue.

[0047] While determining the minimum chrominance signal among each chrominance signal of C, M, and Y as mentioned above and making the amount of arbitration into a black print (K) signal from that minimum chrominance signal as this lower color clearance processing, only that

amount is subtracted from each chrominance signal. Drawing 8 is explanatory drawing by the example of lower color clearance processing. The case where the alphabetic character of the dark color in which each color components C0, M0, and Y0 of C, M, and Y have a big value now as shown in drawing 8 (A) becomes a processing object is considered. In addition, there are so many amounts of color material that each color value of C, M, and Y is large, and it serves as a deep color.

[0048] Among C0, M0, and Y0, the minimum chrominance signal is M component, as shown in drawing 8 (B). It considers as the value K1 of the black print which shows the amount of arbitration to drawing 8 (C) among the values M0 of this M component. And C0, M0, and Y0 to K1 is reduced, and it changes into C1, M1, and Y1. Thus, the picture signal of a CMYK color space as shown in drawing 8 (C) is acquired.

[0049] In the picture signal acquired in the lower color clearance processing section 45 as mentioned above, although total of the value of each color component serves as the total amount of color material, the directions of (C) are decreasing in number [the total amount of color material] compared with drawing 8 (A). Thus, if an image is formed without the alphabetic character of a dark color generating a black print, the amount of color material may increase, and scattering of the color material generated by the oversupply of color material in printer engine 25, the omission of the alphabetic character circumference, etc. may occur. By performing lower color clearance processing and generating a black print by the lower color clearance processing section 45, the total amount of color material decreases and such image quality deterioration has an advantage of stopping arising.

[0050] In addition, even if a lightness flag is "0", in the case of a very bright alphabetic character, the lower color clearance processing in the lower color clearance processing section 45 is canceled, or to it, it processes so that [a black print] it may not be generated substantially. By this, a very bright alphabetic character can be processed so that lightness may not fall.

[0051] When a lightness flag is "1" in return and S66, a selector 44 chooses the color character-manipulation section 46, and performs color transform processing to a color alphabetic character to drawing 7. As for this color transform processing, red and the vivid dark color of being green serve as a processing object. In S68, the color component which has the greatest value among each color component of C, M, and Y is first determined in the maximum color decision section 51. The color component which has the determined greatest value is outputted as a maximum color flag. In S69, it judges whether the color component for which the maximum color flag has "00", i.e., the greatest value, is a Y component. When Y component has the greatest value, in S70, the value of Y component is saturated on the maximum level. Here, each color component sets the value of Y component as 255 in the thing which takes the value of 0-255, then S70.

[0052] In S71, it judges similarly whether the color component for which the maximum color flag has "01", i.e., the greatest value, is an M component. When M component has the greatest value, in S72, the value of M component is set to the maximum level, 255 [for example,], and is saturated. If the value of Y and M component is not max, the value of C component is max. In S73, the value of C component is set to the maximum level, 255 [for example,], and is saturated.

[0053] Drawing 9 is explanatory drawing by the example of a color character manipulation. The case where the alphabetic character which has each color components C0, M0, and Y0 of C, M, and Y as shown in drawing 9 (A) now becomes a processing object is considered. In addition, like drawing 8 , there are so many amounts of color material that each color value of C, M, and Y is large, and it serves as a deep color. When the color component which has the greatest value first is investigated, as shown in drawing 9 (B), the value C0 of C component is the greatest value. Therefore, "10" which shows that C component has the greatest value as a maximum color flag is outputted. According to the flow chart shown in drawing 7 , the value of C component is saturated in S73 in 255 which is the maximum level. As this shows to drawing 9 (C), the value of C component serves as the maximum level. Other color components remain as it is. In addition, a black print is not made in this color character-manipulation section 46. This has protected that a

vivid dark color becomes muddy.

[0054] Thus, screen treatment of the picture signal of the color alphabetic character which performed color transform processing is carried out in the screen treatment section 24, and an image is formed in the printer engine section 25. Then, about the color component which saturated the maximum level, although halftone-dot-ized by screen treatment, the formed image becomes close to a solid image, and is hardly influenced of screen treatment. Therefore, the frame of a color alphabetic character is formed of the color component which saturated this maximum level. Although a halftone dot-like image will be formed in piles about other colors, concentration is thinner than the color component which saturated the maximum level, and it does not appear for appearance so notably. Therefore, the frame of the color component formed of the color component which saturated the maximum level is held, and a color alphabetic character can be formed by good image quality.

[0055] Furthermore, by forming the frame of a color alphabetic character, even if the image of the shape of a halftone dot of other colors formed on it shifts somewhat, there is little effect and it serves as the powerful image-processing method to the fluctuation and the gap of the registration of each color in the printer engine section 25.

[0056] In addition, the alphabetic character color formed of such a color character manipulation compared with the alphabetic character color which the inputted picture signal shows will change a little. However, since the sharpness of an edge is desired rather than the repeatability of a color in the case of a color alphabetic character, by forming the color alphabetic character which held the edge like this invention, a good color alphabetic character can be reproduced and image quality can be raised.

[0057] Moreover, change of a color will become large if processing by this color character-manipulation section 46 is performed about a very bright color. However, about the above very bright color, change of a big color is prevented by not performing processing by this color character-manipulation section 46. In addition, the frequency used in which background with the white alphabetic character of a very bright color is low, and is mainly used by a reversed character etc. in many cases. In a reversed character, since the direction of the perimeter is a dark color, it is more desirable than the interior of an alphabetic character to process so that the edge of an alphabetic character may be saved in a surrounding image.

[0058] Conversely, if the value of each color component is large as drawing 8 showed the very dark alphabetic character, and color conversion is performed so that you may make it saturated to the maximum level about the further greatest color component, the total amount of color material will increase further. Therefore, processing by the color character-manipulation section 46 is omitted also about the very dark alphabetic character here. The processing in this case is as the lower color clearance processing in S67 having described. In addition, in a very dark alphabetic character, since each color component does not appear so notably, the graininess by screen treatment may perform image formation, without also performing lower color clearance processing as it is.

[0059] The picture signal processed by drawing 7 for every return and alphabetic character color in the lower color clearance processing section 45 or the color character-manipulation section 46 is compounded in the synthetic section 47, and the picture signal of the compound CMYK color space is sent to the gradation amendment section 36 of the next step. The picture signal after performing gradation amendment processing in the gradation amendment section 36 serves as an output of a color and the gradation amendment processing sections 23 and 13.

[0060] In addition, also about the image of other attributes, various kinds of color space conversion processings, color correction processings, etc. in the color transform-processing sections 31, 33, and 34 are performed, and gradation amendment processing is further performed and outputted in the gradation amendment sections 35, 37, and 38, respectively. In the system shown in drawing 2, screen treatment will be carried out in the screen treatment section 24 based on this output, and an image will be formed on a record medium-ed in the printer engine section 25. Moreover, in the system shown in drawing 3, this output will be sent to a printer 2, rasterization processing and screen treatment will be performed in the image-processing section 21, and an image will be formed on a record medium-ed in the printer engine section 25.

[0061] Although one gestalt of above-mentioned operation showed as an example the image formation system by which the printer 2 was connected with the host computer 1 in the network etc., in this invention, it does not restrict to this. For example, the configuration that the host computer 1 and the printer 2 were united may be used. Moreover, the system equipped with image input devices, such as a scanner and a digital camera, may be constituted, for example, it can also apply to a copying machine, facsimile, etc. What is necessary is to judge an attribute for every image field by pictorial symbol separation processing etc. from the image obtained from the image input device, and just to perform processing which saves an edge about a color alphabetic character as mentioned above in the system equipped with such an image input device.

[0062]

[Effect of the Invention] Since the image which saved the edge about the color alphabetic character can be formed according to this invention so that clearly from the above explanation, the color alphabetic character which has good readability is reproducible. Moreover, since the edge is made to hold by the color used as the frame of a color alphabetic character in case processing which saves an edge is performed, an edge is not harmed even if it piles up the image of the shape of a halftone dot of other thin colors. On the contrary, a good image can be obtained even if the image of the shape of those halftone dot shifts. Furthermore, in order to generate a black print about a very dark alphabetic character, according to this invention, there are various effects -- image quality deterioration of the oversupply of color material, the omission of an alphabetic character circumference portion, etc. can be prevented.

[Translation done.]

[0053] 図9は、色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。いま、図9(A)に示すようなC, M, Yの各色成分C, M, Yを有する文字が処理対象となつた場合を考える。なお図8と同様に、C, M, Yの各値は、大きいほど色材量が多く、濃い色となる。まず最大の値を有する色成分为Cが最大の値(B)に示すように各色成分の値が大きく、さらに最大の色成分について最大レベルまで飽和させよう。そのため、ここで、総色材量はさらに増大してしまう。そのため、ここでは非常に暗い文字についても色文字処理部4-6による下色除字処理で述べたとおりである。なお、非常に暗い文字では、スクリーン処理による粒状性は色成分为C成分が最大の値を有することを示す。「10」が示したフローチャートに従い、S7-3においてC成分の値を最大レベルである2-5に飽和させる。これによって図9(C)に示すようにC成分の値は最大レベルとなる。他の色成分はそのままである。なお、この色文字処理部4-6において墨盤を作らない。これによって、鮮やかな墨色が綴るのを防いでいる。

[0054] このようにして色変換処理を施した色文字の画像信号をスクリーン処理部2-4でスクリーン処理し、プリンタエンジン部2-5で画像を形成する。すると、最大レベルに飽和させた色成分について、スクリーン処理によって網点化する他の色の形成された画像はベータの画像に近くなり、ほとんどスクリーン処理の影響を受けない。そのため、この最大レベルに飽和させた色成分为Cが最大の値(B)に示すように各色成分について色文字の質感が形成される。他の色については網点化の画像を重ねて形成することになるが、最大レベルに飽和させた色成分よりも濃度が薄く、見た目にはそれほど顕著には現れない。そのため、最大レベルに飽和させた色成分によって形成された色成分の骨格が保持され、良好な墨色で文字を形成することができる。

[0055] さらに、色文字の骨格を形成しておくことにより、その上に形成される他の色の網点化の画像が多少ずれても影響は少なく、プリンタエンジン部2-5における各色のレジストレーションの変動やずれに対応して強い画像処理方法となる。

[0056] なお、このような色文字処理によって、入力された画像信号が示す文字色と比べて形成された文字色は若干変色してしまう。しかし、色成分の組合せは色の再現よりもエッジのシャープさが望まれるため、本発明のようにエッジを保持した色文字を形成することによって、良好な色文字の再現を行うことができ、画質を向上させることができる。

[0057] また、非常に明るい色について、この色文字処理部4-6による処理を行うと、色の変化は大きくなる。しかしながら、上記のように、非常に明るい色についてはこの色文字処理部4-6による処理を行わないことにより、大きな色の変化を防止している。なお、非常に明るい色の文字は白色などの背景において使用される頻度は少なく、主に反転文字などで使用される場合が多い。反転文字などでは、文字の内部より周囲の方が濃色であるため、周囲の画像において文字のエッジを保持するように処理することが望ましい。

など、本発明によれば種々の効果がある。

【図面の簡単な説明】

図8は、下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。図9は、色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図1】

本発明の画像形成システムの実施の一形態を示す構成図である。

【図2】

本発明の画像形成システムの実施の一形態における処理の内容の一例を示すブロック図である。

【図3】

本発明の画像形成システムの実施の一形態における処理の内容の一例を示すブロック図である。

【図4】

色・階調補正処理部の一例を示すブロック図である。

すプローチャートである。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図1】

本発明の画像形成システムの実施の一形態における処理の内容の一例を示すブロック図である。

【図2】

本発明の画像形成システムの実施の一形態における処理の内容の一例を示すブロック図である。

【図3】

本発明の画像形成システムの実施の一形態における処理の内容の一例を示すブロック図である。

【図4】

色・階調補正処理部の一例を示すブロック図である。

14

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図1】

本発明の画像形成システムの実施の一形態における処理の内容の一例を示すブロック図である。

【図2】

本発明の画像形成システムの実施の一形態における処理の内容の一例を示すブロック図である。

【図3】

本発明の画像形成システムの実施の一形態における処理の内容の一例を示すブロック図である。

【図4】

色・階調補正処理部の一例を示すブロック図である。

13

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

12

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

11

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

10

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

9

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

8

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

7

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

6

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

5

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

4

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

3

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

2

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

1

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

13

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

12

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

11

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

10

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

9

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

8

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

7

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

6

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

5

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

4

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

3

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

2

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

1

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

13

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

12

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

11

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

10

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

9

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

色文字処理の具体例による説明図である。

8

下色除去部である。

【図8】

下色除去処理の具体例による説明図である。

【図9】

[図5]

